

The Scenario of Domestic Abuse against Women in Kashmir

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Abstract: Domestic violence against women in Kashmir has been prevalent for a long time, but it is only in recent times that voices have been raised against it. Earlier it was considered a taboo to talk about such issues that happened 'behind closed door' or were a 'part' of married life, but the alarming increase in suicides and suicidal attempts has forced people to acknowledge the presence of this evil. Many a times, people blame the working culture of women as being one of the main causes of problems between spouses or partners as their leaving the homes is considered to give the women lofty ideas. This particular research was conducted to study whether there is any difference in domestic violence suffered by housewives and working women. The sample consisted of 80 women out of whom 40 were working and 40 were housewives. The women were identified from the Women's Police Station Ram Bagh. The results showed that there is in fact, no significant difference in the abuse suffered by women who are housewives and those that are working.

Keywords: domestic abuse, women, violence, spousal abuse, Kashmir

Domestic abuse, also known as spousal abuse, battering, family violence, and intimate partner violence (IPV), is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviours by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, family, or cohabitation. Domestic violence is when an intimate partner, such as a spouse or a person you cohabit with, physically, sexually, or psychologically abuses you. Domestic abuse, so defined, has many forms, including physical aggression or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; economic deprivation etc. Domestic violence (DV) can be possibly considered the most important element of the set of violence against women because of its far-reaching implications on their health, physical as well as psychological. It is not only a matter of human rights but also a concern of public health (Heise et al. 2002; Bates et al. 2004).

Domestic abuse occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person. Domestic abuse that includes physical violence is called domestic violence. Domestic violence and abuse are used only for one purpose and that is to gain and maintain total control over the other. Abusers use fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear the person down and keep him/her under the abusers thumb. The abuser may also threaten, hurt the person, or hurt those around the person. Domestic violence against women exists in every society, ranging from low income countries to the highly developed ones.

Jayaraman (2004) reports that at least one-third of all women have experienced domestic violence (by their husbands/family members) in their lifetime. In various socio-economic surveys on India, between 22 and 48 per cent women have reported domestic violence against them. A number of studies revealed strong negative relations between the risk of domestic violence and household wealth and husband's education (Kim and Cho 1992; Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Martin et al. 1999; Hoffman et al. 1994, Mahajan 1990). Women depending highly on marriage, experience greater abuse, and male-dominated marriage also raises the risk of violence against females (Coleman and Straus 1986; Allen and Straus 1980). On the other hand, women's higher degree of autonomy and greater control over resources are thought to act as shields against violence (Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Jejeebhoy 1998; Levinson 1989). However, some argue that this association may be context-specific and in a relatively conservative setting, higher degree of female autonomy may actually raise the risk of violence (Levinson 1989; Koenig, et al. 2003). Using data from Northern India, Koenig et al (2006), show that although higher socioeconomic status was instrumental in reducing physical violence, it could not prevent sexual violence. Their findings also indicate the importance of contextual factors. Jayaraman (2004), using data from India, showed that man's preferences over domestic violence are consonant with expressive and instrumental aggression.

Very often the women, as victims of abuse do not report the violence in fear of the abuser or what the society might think. In some cases, the woman might actually believe that she deserves the abuse for not being a good wife, mother, daughter-in-law etc., and therefore does not report the abuse. In families where violence is common, the children are brought up thinking that profanity, slapping, hitting etc., is just the way of the world. So, when these children grow up, they believe abusing and being abused is "normal." Although domestic

violence can affect anyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status or their racial and cultural background, women who are young, indigenous, have a disability, or who live in rural areas are thought to be at greater risk.

I. Causes Of Abuse

Abusers come from all different types of backgrounds and as such there is no exact cause as to why some people abuse others. Even though there are theories to explain these behaviours, but nothing can justify their cruel actions and they must take responsibility. History has shown that violence against women has not been treated as a “real” crime. It is something that ‘just happens’. Most of the times, battering goes unnoticed, unreported and hence, unpunished. Lack of severe consequences such as economic penalties and incarceration for the men guilty of abuse and battering makes this apparent. Men who are known abusers are rarely ostracized. Most abusers are accepted by the people in their communities regardless of how they treat their partners. Usually no one can tell by looking at them that they are abusers because they come from all backgrounds, groups and personality profiles. But there are some characteristics that fit the profile of such persons.

- The abuser sees women as objects and not people. He has no respect for women as a group and views them as property and sexual objects.
- An abuser has low self-esteem and feels powerless and ineffective. Although he may appear to be successful, inside he feels inadequate.
- An abuser finds external excuses for his behaviour. He will blame his violence on having had a bad day, alcohol or drug use, his partner’s behaviour or anything that comes to mind to excuse his violent actions.
- He may be charming and pleasant between his acts of violence, and outsiders may view him as a nice person.
- An abuser may display some warning signs such as a bad temper, cruelty to animals, extreme jealousy, possessiveness, verbal abuse and/or unpredictability.

There are many different theories as to the causes of domestic violence. These include psychological theories that consider personality traits (sudden bursts of anger, poor impulse control, and poor self-esteem) and mental characteristics of the perpetrator, as well as social theories which consider external factors in the perpetrator's environment, such as family structure, stress and social learning. Some research suggests that about 80% of both court-referred and self-referred men in domestic violence studies exhibited diagnosable psychopathology, typically personality disorders. As violence becomes more severe and chronic in the relationship, the likelihood of psychopathology in these men approached 100%. Dutton (2011) has suggested a psychological profile of men who abuse their wives, arguing that they have borderline personalities that are developed early in life. However, these psychological theories are disputed. Gelles & Straus (1999) suggest that psychological theories are limited, and points out those other researchers have found that only 10% (or less) fit this psychological profile. He argues that social factors are important, while personality traits, mental illness, or psychopathy are lesser factors. If one spouse desires control and power in the relationship, the spouse may resort to abuse. This may include coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, economic abuse, isolation and blaming the spouse, using children (threatening to take them away), and behaving as the master. Researches that focus on children suggest that experiences throughout life influence an individuals' tendency to engage in family violence (either as a victim or as a perpetrator). Children who observe their parents abusing each other, or who were themselves abused may include abuse into their behaviour within relationships that they establish as adults (Gelles, 1999) As is the case with many phenomena regarding human experience, no single approach appears to cover all cases.

II. Types Of Abuse

Abuse doesn’t only refer to physical violence and battering. Sometimes people think that since they haven't been hit or seriously injured, they are not victims of abuse. What we know is that abuse happens in many more ways than just physical assaults. There are many other ways by which a person can dominate and/or hurt the intimate other and that all forms of abuse are scary, painful, and shaming.

a) Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is abuse involving contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering and/or bodily harm. Physical abuse includes hitting, slapping, punching, choking, pushing, burning and other types of contact that result in physical injury to the victim. It can also include behaviours such as denying the victim of medical care when needed, depriving the victim of sleep or other functions necessary to live, or forcing the victim to engage in drug/alcohol use against her will. If a person is suffering from any physical harm then they are experiencing physical abuse. This pain can be experienced on any level. It can also include inflicting physical injury onto other targets, such as children or pets, in order to cause psychological harm to the victim.

b) Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse (also called psychological abuse or mental abuse) can include humiliating the victim privately or publicly, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family, implicitly blackmailing the victim by harming others when the victim expresses independence or happiness, or denying the victim access to money or other basic resources and necessities. Degradation in any form including undermining the victim's self-worth or self-esteem can be considered psychological abuse. Often perpetrators will use children to engage in emotional abuse by teaching them to harshly criticize the victim as well. These behaviours also lead the victims to question themselves, causing them to believe that they are making up the abuse or that the abuse is their fault.

c) Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse is a form of emotionally abusive behaviour involving the use of language and can also be referred to as the act of threatening. It may include profanity but can occur with or without the use of expletives. Verbal abuse may include aggressive actions such as name-calling, blaming, ridicule, disrespect, and criticism, but there are also less obviously aggressive forms of verbal abuse. Statements that may seem gentle on the surface can be thinly veiled attempts to humiliate; falsely accuse; or manipulate others to submit to undesirable behaviour, make others feel unwanted and unloved, etc. While oral communication is the most common form of verbal abuse, it can also include abusive communication in written form.

d) Economic Abuse

Economic abuse is a form of abuse when one intimate partner has control over the other partner's access to economic resources. It may involve preventing a spouse from resource acquisition, limiting the amount of resources to use by the victim, and/or exploiting economic resources of the victim (having the name of the abuser on all the victims' property like house, cars, and apartments). The motive behind preventing a spouse from acquiring resources is to diminish the victim's capacity to support her, thus forcing her to depend on the perpetrator financially. In addition, the abuser may also put the victim on an allowance, closely monitor how the victim spends money, spend victim's money without her consent and creating debt, or completely spend victim's savings to limit available resources.

e) Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any situation in which force or threat is used to obtain participation in unwanted sexual activity. Coercing a person to engage in sexual activity against their will, even if that person is a spouse or intimate partner with whom consensual sex has occurred, is an act of aggression and violence. Sexual abuse includes forcing the person into participating in any sexual act with which he/she is uncomfortable, forcing a person to look, act or pose for pornography, knowingly infecting the person with HIV, STDs etc and involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the sexual act, unable to decline participation, or unable to communicate unwillingness to engage in the sexual act, because of illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or pressure.

III. Recognizing And Identifying Domestic Abuse

There are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most telling sign is when a woman fears the man in the relation and she constantly watches what she says and does in order to avoid a blow-up. Other signs that someone may be in an abusive relationship include a partner who belittles or tries to control the partner and the woman has feelings of self-loathing, helplessness, and desperation.

Domestic abuse falls into a common pattern, or cycle of violence. The abusive partner lashes out with aggressive, belittling, or violent behavior. The abuse is a power play designed to instill fear in the victim. After abusing the victim, the partner feels guilt, but NOT over what he's done. He's more worried about the possibility of being caught and facing consequences for his abusive behavior. The abuser then rationalizes what he has done. The person may come up with a string of excuses or blame the victim for the abusive behavior—anything to avoid taking responsibility. The abuser does everything he can to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship. He may act as if nothing has happened, or he may turn on the charm. This peaceful honeymoon phase may give the victim hope that the abuser has really changed this time.

After this show of normalcy, the abuser begins to fantasize about abusing the partner again. He spends a lot of time thinking about what she's done wrong and how he'll make her pay. Then he makes a plan for turning the fantasy of abuse into reality. The abuser sets the victim up and puts his plan in motion, creating a situation where he can justify abusing her. The abuser's apologies and loving gestures in between the episodes of abuse can make it difficult to leave. He may make the woman believe that she is the only person who can

help him, that things will be different the next time, and that he truly loves her. However, the dangers of staying are very real, since for the perpetrator it's an ongoing fantasy.

IV. Domestic Violence In Kashmir

Domestic abuse has been increasing at an alarming rate in the Valley. Even though most of the people refuse to acknowledge the prevalence of domestic abuse in Kashmir, the recent reports and studies prove otherwise. The data that is available doesn't accurately portray the real scenario due to a number of issues. Most of the women don't speak about it as they believe (or are made to believe) that it's their destiny or kismet, and they have to 'live' with it. A large number of women do not see such acts as violence if they believe them to be justified. Thus, wife beating is not seen as an extreme response if the woman gives cause for jealousy or does not perform her "wifely" duties adequately, such as having meals ready on time or adequately caring for children. This is further complicated by a common belief that violent acts are an expression of love and merely a desire to help the subject be a "better" person (International Center For Research On Women, 1999). A large number of the women are unwilling to file a grievance or a complaint of this nature due to the disgrace that will befall them and their family. Many are scared of the legal issues and hassles which come with the territory. The Women's Police Station in Ram Bagh, reports that more than 2800 cases are filed every year. But more than half are withdrawn due to family pressure or some sort of settlement between the parties. According to sources around 550 cases were reported in 2013 and the numbers increased to 3000 in 2014. The police station, on an average, receives over a dozen complaints of domestic dispute, per day.

The mounting incidents of domestic violence compelled the state government to pass the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) in 2010. Since the Act was passed, very few efforts were made for the proper implementation of the Act, though the domestic violence against women is rising in Jammu and Kashmir. The state government seems to be too lethargic in providing an effective protection to the aggrieved persons under PWDVA which indicates that the state is reluctant in fulfilling the promise as mandated by the law. The then Minister of Social Welfare of Jammu and Kashmir in 2012 clearly blamed lack of funds as being the cause of improper implementation of the Act. Also, the State's budget of 2014-2015 has not allocated enough funds for the proper implementation of the Act.

Research indicates that more than 40 percent of women in Kashmir are physically or emotionally abused by the husbands and/ or the in-laws. Researchers are of the opinion that dowry; misunderstandings between the couple, birth of a girl child are the common reasons behind marital discord leading to an increase in the domestic violence in the Valley. Research also relates unemployment and the political unrest in the Valley turmoil etc., to the escalating violence. The State Women Commission J&K receives about 1700 domestic violence cases every year but majority cases come from the Kashmir Valley. The Jammu region of the State witnesses less domestic violence cases than the Kashmir valley, according to the Commission's figures. Dr. Mushtaq Margoob, a prominent psychiatrist of the Valley, is of the opinion that the majority of the psychiatric problems among women in Kashmir are due to domestic violence. The insecurity and lack of confidence among women because of abuse can at times lead to suicide attempts. Also, Dr. Margoob believes that women who face domestic violence suffer from psychological anxiety which also impacts their overall health.

At least three women lost their lives owing to domestic abuse during the month of May this year. Maroofa Begum from the Pulwama district was admitted in SMHS hospital after she was allegedly set ablaze by her in-laws. Maroofa finally succumbed on May 15 after fighting for her life for some days. Another woman from Shopian in south Kashmir, died in the same hospital after she had set herself ablaze to escape abuse at the hands of her husband. A mother of four children was allegedly beaten to death by her husband and in-laws in north Kashmir's Uri. Prof B. A. Dabla a well known sociologist of Kashmir blames the patriarchal society for violence against women. According to Prof. Dabla, gender inequality is still widespread in our society. The resentment against women folk still exists here. The narrow social and mental set up has resulted in increasing violence against women.

A core issue is that intimate partner violence and abuse at the hands of the in-laws is considered to be mainly a social issue. It is only in extreme cases such as deaths and serious injuries, that the authorities take notice of the offence. But, even then it's too late for the victim as there is usually not much left to be done except for investigation, trials etc. Another problem is that the state's social welfare department is more or less non-existent. Over the past years it has become obsolete and its functioning is centred on a few of issues and problems. Even as the social welfare department has not shown any development or maturity in past years, there does not seem to be any institution on the State that would take these cases. The police are often the last resort, as people are afraid of getting involved with them. The responsibility lies with us as well as the leaders of the society to come up with solutions to end this major problem.

Abdul Rashid Hanjura, who is a social activist and lawyer, is of the opinion that the situation in the Valley is aggravated due to the fact that many such incidents go unreported and thus the guilty get no

punishment. Even if such events do get reported, due to low (negligible) conviction rate, criminals have the guts to go on committing crimes unabashedly because they know severe action will not be taken against them.

Objective:

- To study the difference in domestic violence between housewives and working women.

V. Methodology:

Sample: The sample consisted of 80 women who were identified from the Women’s Police station Ram Bagh. Out of these women, 40 were working and 40 were housewives.

Tools Used: HITS Tool for Intimate Partner Violence Screening (2003) (Kevin Sherin). HITS is one of the most commonly used tools to screen for IPV. It is a four-item questionnaire that asks respondents how often their partner physically hurts, insults, threatens with harm, and screams at them. These four items make the acronym HITS. Each item is scored from 1-5. Thus, scores for this inventory range from 4-20. A score of more than 10 is considered positive for domestic violence. Cronbach’s alpha was found to be .80 for the HITS scale.

Procedure:

The women were approached in the Women’s police station and a sympathetic and understanding relationship was developed along with rapport. Confidentiality was assured to overcome any fear of publicity and to increase motivation. Then the questionnaire was administered on them and the responses were obtained. Besides the general instructions, specific test instructions were provided with the questionnaire.

VI. Analysis And Interpretation Of Data:

The present study aims at studying the difference in domestic abuse between working women and housewives.

T test

Group Statistics

Working	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TOTAL 1	40	16.2500	2.78043	.43962
2	40	15.6000	2.81753	.44549

Independent Samples Test

TOTAL	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality Of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
	.035	.853	1.039	78	.302	.65000	.62588	-.59604	1.89604
			1.039	77.986	.302	.65000	.62588	-.59604	1.89604

The above table shows the difference in abuse among working women ad housewives. It is evident from the above table that there is no significant difference in the abuse suffered among women whether they work or stay at home.

VII. Discussion:

The present research endeavour was conducted with the aim to study the present condition of domestic abuse suffered by women in Kashmir. Since many women are working nowadays, the intention was to see whether the independence of women made any significant difference in IPV. The results of the study revealed that there is no significant correlation in abuse between working women and housewives.

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